



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

must go to work, while as capital would have no value, the poor could command it. As one of the first consequences, "all mere waste will be stopped; we must give up tobacco and whiskey; and the luxuries, as they are called, will be dispensed with." Lifting the eyes to the actual world, one wonders what period, at the present rate of progress, might be assigned for attaining this desirable consummation. "But I expect nothing from Political Economy without Christianity." We should say that, as far as the evidence in hand goes, the latter was decidedly the best reliance.

4. — *La Légende des Siècles*. Par VICTOR HUGO. Nouvelle Série. Paris : Calmann Lévy, Editeur. 1877. 2 vols. 8vo.

THE literature of our century presents one name which pales, no doubt, before the universal lustre of Goethe's, but whose many-sided brightness seems to eclipse its contemporaries. Victor Hugo has done many things, and he cannot be said to have done anything ill. His novels, for instance, have followed the stories of Dumas into every nook and corner of the civilized world, although they obviously appeal to a distinct order of minds, and challenge a far more serious attention. In the teeth of violent opposition his dramas conquered a foothold on the stage of the Comédie Française, and have since been reproduced in translation, paraphrase, or libretto by most of the great theatres in Europe and America. Until lately the success of the novelist and the notoriety of the dramatist had in some degree obscured his lyric triumphs, although he early vindicated his claim to leadership in a choir which has included the voices of Lamartine, De Musset, Gauthier, and De la Vigne. In the "Legend of the Ages," of which a new series has just appeared, we have a composite, incoherent creation which has been absurdly called an epic, but which is really strong and admirable only where the author works familiar veins, namely, in the lyric, idyllic, and narrative parts.

It would be more reasonable to treat "Les Misérables" as a novel than the "Legend of the Ages" as an epic, and this of course is tantamount to saying that the latter is in no sense an organic work, cast in a determinate artistic form, and evolving a central thought, but a mere fasciculus of poems presenting an endless diversity of structure and tone. In the compass of a brief notice we cannot be expected to glance in detail at any of these, but we may state in passing that an episode entitled "Paternity," in the Pyrenean Cycle, is a characteristic example of the writer's narrative style, and that the "Song of Sophocles at

Salamis," as well as the portrait of Chloe, in an idyl headed "Longus," express the spirit of the antique with more felicity than anything we know, unless it be Gauthier's cameos. But there is one distinctive quality which pervades Victor Hugo's poetry, and is conspicuous in the volumes before us, and which cannot therefore be overlooked in the most cursory reference. This is the spontaneity of his utterance, the catholicity of his aims and methods, his vehement revolt against the authority of models and traditions, which cramped for some two centuries the development of French literature. In lyric verse Hugo is what Diderot was in other directions,—an iconoclast, and he may be said to have burst the gyves of precision and propriety which Malherbe and Boileau affixed to the French lyre. He has created, or rather resurrected, a new art of poetry and a new poetic vocabulary. In other words, he owes almost nothing to his predecessors of the so-called classic school, and exhibits a curious case of reversion to Ronsard and Clement Marot. This is the secret both of the acrimonious debate which a new volume by Victor Hugo commonly provokes at home, and of the prompt recognition which it secures in foreign countries,—he never writes in the grooves which Frenchmen have been taught to think the immutable laws of form, but with a freedom of touch once applicable to all the Romanic languages while they were still ductile and fervid. Regarded as an artist, and with an eye to his shortcomings and failures no less than to his master-strokes, Hugo is seen to have little in common with Goethe or Racine, but to belong somewhere in the category of Shakespeare, Marlowe, De Vega, and Jean Paul.

When we weigh the influence on an author's contemporaries and immediate successors of a work like this "Legend of the Ages," which, in spite of some ruggedness and faultiness, is a positive, massive, and fecund achievement, we can see that the peculiarities of personal character, the attitude and pressure of individual minds, which in social science we have so often to disregard, are factors indispensable for the explanation of some literary phenomena. It is tolerably certain, for instance, that if Regnier had not died young, he might have hindered Malherbe and the pedants of the seventeenth century from chastising the graceful nonchalance of Ronsard, and it is equally certain that André Chenier, had he lived, would have done much of the work which it was left to Hugo to carry out. As it was, until the rise of "romanticism," of which we need not say our author is the most eminent champion, it had come to be the creed of Frenchmen that the classic school had given to every form of poetry a consummate and flawless type from which divergence was a kind of blasphemy. Even French lyric verse, for instance, like the Greek tragedy, was expected to look well to her gown,

compose her features, and move with a staid step. The troubles and perplexities of real life, homely passions and griefs, were banished from the canvas, and of course the studied refinement and chastened grace of such compositions required a language of their own, a sustained and dainty diction limited in scope, but exquisitely tempered. Now, Victor Hugo's example has gone far to dethrone such principles and models. In the "Legend of the Ages" there is a miscellany of themes, and a variety of treatment which is shocking to those conservative men of letters who take their cue from Boileau, and keep alive a reverence for what they call the "language of the gods." No doubt much of the raw material worked over in these volumes comes from what "classicists" esteem the legitimate storehouse, namely, from Greek myths and Roman chronicles; but their distinctive merit is that the author seems equally able to detect some flute-notes of beauty amid the crash and discords of daily life, and that what oppressed Racine, for instance, — the rush and scramble of interests, the jostlings and trappings of the street, smoke of market and din of forum, — seem powerless to tease or cloud his spirit. The result is that even the levities, quips, and follies which were interdicted by that demure and fastidious mistress, the classic Muse, have been welcomed back by the apostle of romanticism. In a word, the faults not less than the felicities of Victor Hugo, considered as an artist, are the inevitable outgrowth of his method. He is not always successful in borrowing from Nature her bizarre effects of light and shade, or in compelling as she compels the trivial to relieve or heighten the sublime. He sometimes carries too far the hint that nonchalance is the refinement of artifice. And finally, his canvas undoubtedly reveals the latent powers of the grotesque, which, as he somewhere tells us, is "leagued on one side with terror, and clinging on the other to the tendrils of pity," but he does not always perceive that at its feet yawns a gulf which we call bathos.

5. — *History of French Literature.* By HENRI VAN LAUN. Part II.

From the Classical Renaissance to the Reign of Louis the Fourteenth.
New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1877. 2 vols. pp. 392.

THE first part of this History, which we noticed in our January issue, extended from the origin of French literature to the Classical Renaissance. The second, lately published, extends from the Renaissance to the close of the reign of Louis the Fourteenth; and a third will probably complete the subject, bringing it down to the present time.

Mr. Henri Van Laun enjoys peculiar advantages for executing the task